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ABSTRACT

The Illinois Prekindergarten At-Risk Program provides early childhood experiences to enhance the development of children at risk of academic failure. This report presents a summary and analysis of the annual evaluation data obtained from school districts participating in this program for the 1990-91 school year. The report includes the following sections: executive Summary; Introduction; Evaluation Design and Limitations; Program Description; Success in Elementary Grades Longitudinal Study; Sustained Effects; Characteristics of Children Served; Financial Summary; Program Characteristics, and Conclusion. The sustained effects study indicated a majority of children in this program ranked as average or above average in performance across different instructional areas through third grade. The report concludes that the program has had a positive influence on kindergarten readiness and that performance levels have been sustained in the early elementary grades. Appendices include the Illinois State Board of Education Policy Statement on Early Childhood Education; the School Code of Illinois; and the number of prekindergarten projects in each Illinois county for fiscal year 1992. Included also are 13 data tables and 8 figures. (MM)

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# Illinois Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure FY 91 Summary Report

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**ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Department of Planning, Research and Evaluation**

**June 1992**

# ILLINOIS PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE FY 91 SUMMARY REPORT

**ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**
**Department of Planning, Research and Evaluation**

**June 1992**

**Louis Mervis, Chairman**
**State Board of Education**

**Robert Leininger**
**State Superintendent of Education**

## FOREWORD

This document presents a summary and analysis of the annual evaluation data obtained from school districts participating in the Illinois Prekindergarten At-Risk Program for the 1990-91 school year.

For further information concerning this report, please contact Kalpana Desai, Department of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Illinois State Board of Education at 217/782-3950.

The interpretations and conclusions expressed herein have been prepared by staff and do not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of the Illinois State Board of Education.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Illinois Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure was authorized in 1985 through Section 2-3.71 of the School Code. The statute authorized the State Board of Education to implement and administer a grant program to public school districts to conduct preschool education programs for children ages 3 to 5 who are at-risk of academic failure. The statute also required the State Board of Education to report to the General Assembly by July 1, 1989, and every three years thereafter, on results and progress of students who were enrolled in preschool education programs.

The following are highlights of the findings from the FY 91 evaluation and a comparison of the program with FY 87, the first full year of the Prekindergarten At-Risk Program.

- Statewide, 236 project sites received state funds to serve children in 475 districts, a 151% increase compared to FY 87 funded projects (94).

- The number of children participating increased from 18,660 in FY 90 to 24,356 (31%) in FY 91. This represents a 250% increase from the 6,953 children participating in FY 87.

- The state allocation for the prekindergarten at-risk program was $63 million. This is a 31% increase from the FY 90 allocation of $45 million and a 195% increase from the FY 87 allocation of $12.7 million.

- The average cost per child remained almost the same from $2,124 in FY 90 to $2,182 in FY 91. The average state cost per child in FY 87 was $1,827.

- Statewide, 25% of the children were ranked by their teachers as above average and 49% as average in their kindergarten readiness skills at the end of their prekindergarten experience. These percentages have gradually increased since the program's beginning. In FY 87, 18% of the children were ranked as above average and 38% as average.

- The sustained effects study indicates a majority (75 to 79%) of children are ranked as above average or average in performance across different instructional areas through the third grade. The retention rate of these children was only 2 to 3%.

- As the program expanded, projects were able to serve more 3-year-olds. In FY 88, 31% of the children served were not age-eligible for kindergarten at the end of the year. In FY 91, that figure was 38%.

- The ratio of male and female children participating has remained the same with 53% being male and 47% female. In FY 88, 55% of the children were male and 45% were female.

- The ethnic composition of children receiving prekindergarten services was 47% white, 31% black, 18% Hispanic, 2% Asian and 1% American Indian and other. This ratio has not significantly changed since FY 87, but the percentage of Hispanic children has increased from 13% in FY 87 to 18% in FY 91.

- In FY 91, 68% of the participating children were eligible for free lunch, compared to 76% in FY 87.

- In FY 91, 32% of the children served were from single-parent homes and 4% were living with adults other than their parents. In FY 87, 37% of the children served were from single-parent homes and 3% were living with adults other than their parents.

- The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers (831.2) increased 24% from FY 90 (FTE 671.3) and 254% from FY 88 (234.5 FTE). However, the percent of teachers holding Early Childhood certificates decreased from 58% in FY 90 to 55% in FY 91.

- The adult-child ratio of 1 to 7 in the largest classroom has remained the same. This ratio is less than the maximum allowed by the rules and regulations of the prekindergarten program (one adult to 10 children and no more than 20 children in each classroom).

- On average, children attended 121 days with 11.6 hours of classroom instruction each week.

- The majority of the children served had no previous preschool experience. In FY 87, 63% had no previous preschool experience. These percentages have remained about the same; in FY 91, 65% had no previous preschool experience. Children with two years of at-risk prekindergarten program experience were ranked higher than other children, with 78% being ranked as above average or average in readiness skills, compared to 71% of those with no experience.

- Ninety percent of the parents were reported to be involved in their children's prekindergarten experiences. Seventy-eight percent of the children whose parents participated in four or more activities were ranked above average or average in kindergarten readiness skills, compared to 62% whose parents participated in two or less. This trend has been observed since the beginning of the program.

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## INTRODUCTION

On May 9, 1985, the State Board of Education adopted a policy statement on early childhood education. Legislation enacted in 1985 authorized the State Board of Education to administer a new grant program which enabled school districts to operate prekindergarten programs for children aged 3 to 5 years old. The statute (Sec. 2-3.71, of the School Code) identified the eligible population to be served in this program as "children who were at risk of academic failure because of their home and community environment." (See Appendix A for a copy of the Board's policy statement and Appendix B for a copy of the statute.)

According to the Act, "Funds shall be distributed for the benefit of children who, because of their home and community environment, are subject to such language, cultural, economic and like disadvantages that they have been determined, as a result of screening procedures, to be at risk of academic failure."

Research indicates a disproportionate share of children at-risk come from poor families where English is not spoken as the primary language in the home, or have parent(s) who either are teenagers or have not yet completed high school. Children at-risk may also include children who were born prematurely or who had a low birth weight; these children may be developmentally delayed neurologically, but are not physically disabled.

The procedures used to identify children who are at risk of academic failure are based on the results from individual screening and assessment and are not determined by an individual's membership in a given group or the characteristics of their family.

## EVALUATION DESIGN AND LIMITATIONS

This report is based on information collected from each project at the end of the school year by the following data collection instruments:

- Prekindergarten Program Record - collects information regarding program characteristics;
- Prekindergarten Student Record - collects information regarding the characteristics of students served, their status and performance; and
- Prekindergarten Follow-up Report - collects information to measure performance of children in succeeding school years.

**Limitations**

To generalize the effects of all preschool projects by measuring a child's readiness skills for kindergarten has several constraints. Each child was potentially at a different level of "risk" since each program had its own criteria and prescreening tests to determine the child's eligibility for the program. Also, the readiness measurement at the end of participation may be different for each program. Therefore, the numbers of children reported to be above average, average, below average, and deficient at the end of each program should be viewed within this context.

This evaluation report describes program and participant characteristics and presents information about a number of program variables linked to participant performance. Inferences about causal relationships are not intended, and assumptions about linking program services to participant outcomes should be made with caution.

Factors which limit the ability to generalize the evaluations results to all projects and participants across the state include the following:

- Individual projects are required to establish their own eligibility criteria and methods for screening based on local needs. There exists no single uniform eligibility standard or screening system applied to all age-appropriate populations.
- The program requires that all participants' performance be ranked above average, average, below average or deficient. No single standardized assessment instrument is applied statewide. Final rankings are based on subjective judgments influenced by locally defined performance standards and assessment practices.
- Statewide variations in population characteristics and related needs influence project characteristics. The character of the program's services at each project may differ from project to project as a result of program designs tailored to community needs.

However, the data collected and the subsequent evaluation help identify factors that seem to be related to performance and provide a partial explanation of how students are responding to prekindergarten experiences. The next sections deal with the findings from these data.

The 31% increase in funds enabled programs to serve 31% more children (from 18,660 in FY 90 to 24,356 in FY 91).

Table 2 displays the number of children who received services and the number who were eligible but did not receive services in three categories: statewide, downstate, and Chicago.

Table 2. Number of Children Participating in FY 91

| | Statewide | Downstate | Chicago |
|---|---|---|---|
| Children Enrolled | 24,356 | 15,824 | 8,532 |
| Children Participating in Their Second Year of the Program | 5,056 | 3,399 | 1,657 |
| Total Number of Children Enrolled During Summer | 15,887 | 2,328 | 13,559 |
| Number of Children Who Participated Only in the Summer Program | 5,641 | 614 | 5,027 |
| Eligible after Screening, but Not Enrolled | 6,674 | 3,633 | 3,041 |

## SUCCESS IN ELEMENTARY GRADES LONGITUDINAL STUDY: SUSTAINED EFFECTS

The Illinois Prekindergarten At-Risk Program is designed to provide early childhood experiences to enhance growth and development of participants to assure a reasonable chance for academic success in school. To determine the success of the program, data are annually collected and reported on all the children who have participated in the program. The teachers in elementary grades were asked to rank children who participated in the prekindergarten program on their academic performance in reading, mathematics, language and behavior. The four performance categories were above average, average, below average, and deficient. Statewide, at the end of 1990-91 school year, 70 to 77% of the students who attended a prekindergarten at-risk program were ranked as above average or average in three instructional areas, with reading being weakest (70%) and mathematics the strongest (77%). The behavior of about 80% of the children was judged as above average or average.

The promotion rate was another variable used to determine program success. In FY 91, 97% of all children who had participated in the prekindergarten program were promoted to the next grade. This 97% promotion rate includes 75% promoted to next regular grade, with an additional 13% promoted with the recommendation for supplemental services, 4% referred for special education resource services, 1.2% referred to transition class and 1.6% referred to special education self-contained classroom. Only 3% of the children were retained in elementary grades.

The performance of students by grade is indicated in Figure 1. With FY 87 being the first full year of the prekindergarten program, most of the children participating in FY 87 were in the third grade in FY 91. As Figure 1 indicates, 75 to 80% of these children were ranked by their teachers as above average or average in different instructional areas. Children in the third grade continued to perform at the same level as when they were in kindergarten. (See Table 9 in Appendix C.)

FIGURE 1
FY 91 ASSESSMENT OF PREKINDERGARTEN CHILDREN IN ELEMENTARY GRADES

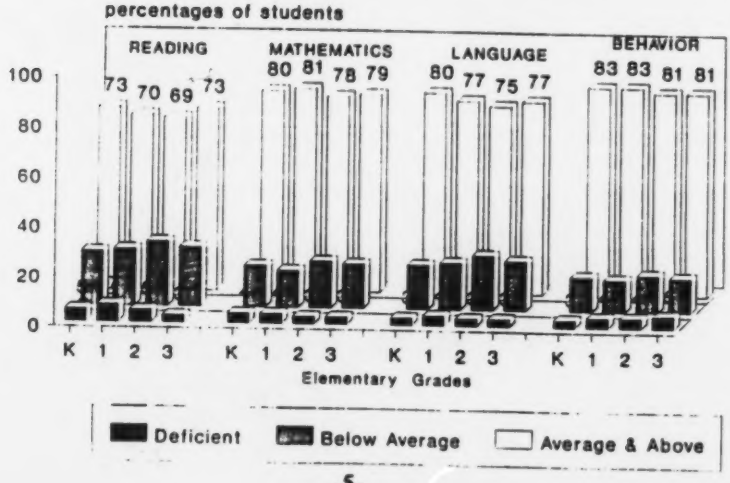


Table 3 indicates that the promotion rate has remained relatively the same over the years. There has been a small change from kindergarten promotion (81%) to first graders (75%), which could be the result of nonretention policies at the kindergarten level in many districts. The promotion rate (73-76%) remains the same for first graders to third graders. The retention rate decreased from 5% for first graders to 2% for third graders. Children in Chicago show relatively the same pattern of success as children in downstate districts.

The results of the longitudinal study in FY 89 and FY 90 reflected similar patterns. Considering the fact that children in the program were identified as potentially at risk of academic failure, a more than 80% success rate reflects positively on the program's effectiveness.

Table 3. FY 92 Recommended Placement by Elementary Grades of Children Who Attended Prekindergarten Programs

| Placement 1991-92 | Kindergarten | First Grade | Second Grade | Third Grade |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Advance to Next Regular Grade | 81% | 75% | 73% | 76% |
| Advance to Next Grade with Supplemental Services | 11% | 14% | 16% | 15% |
| Advance to Next Grade with Special Education Services | 3% | 4% | 7% | 6% |
| Advance to Transition Class | 2% | - | - | - |
| Refer for Special Education Placement | 1% | 2% | 1% | 1% |
| Retention | 2% | 5% | 3% | 2% |
| Unknown* | (1.9%) | (0.6%) | (0.5%) | (0.2%) |

Note: Percentages were calculated without including unknown.

* Percent of total children.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN SERVED

Research has shown that environmental background plays a major role in academic success or failure. To evaluate the characteristics of the children served, projects are asked to report information on each child's ethnicity, family structure, health, primary language, free-lunch status and any previous preschool experiences. At the end of the prekindergarten program, teachers are asked to rank each child's readiness for kindergarten according to a four-category scale: above average, average, below average, and deficient. These rankings are based on teacher judgment influenced by local assessment practices. In aggregate, some factors appear to be associated with participant success.

An effort has been made in this section of the evaluation report to answer these primary questions:

- What are the characteristics of the children served in the prekindergarten program?
- What factors seem to be related to success of children in prekindergarten?

### Family Structure

Statewide, about two-thirds (63.4%) of the children served came from homes where both parents are present. In Chicago, almost half of the children served came from single-parent families. This ratio has remained the same from FY 86 through FY 91.

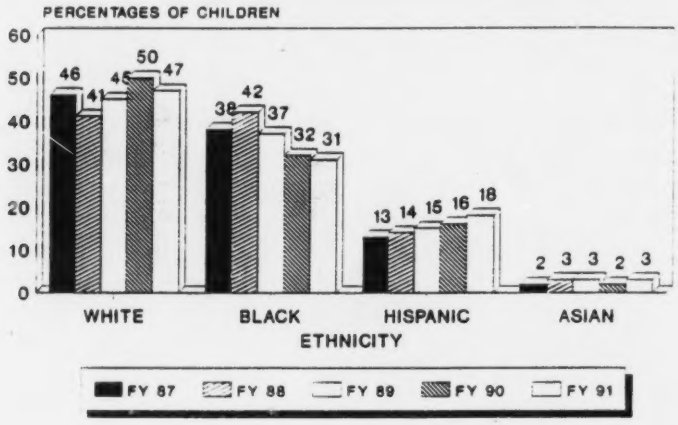
Data indicate that children from homes with both parents present were ranked as high achievers. Almost 77% were ranked as above average or average compared to 70% of the children from single-parent families (see Table 10 in Appendix C.)

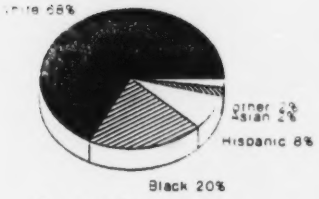
### Racial/Ethnic Breakdown

In FY 91, more than half the children (53%) served were from a minority group. About 47% of the children were white; 31%, black; 18%, Hispanic; and 3%, Asian. "Other," including American Indians, accounted for less than one percent. Statewide, the program's ethnic and racial configuration has changed very little since FY 87 (Figure 2). There have been slight fluctuations in the percent of black and white children who have been served, 30-40% black and 40-50% white, and each year the percent of Hispanic children has gradually increased, (13% in FY 87 to 18% in FY 91).

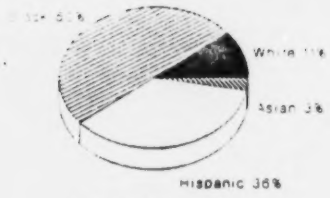
There is a great deal of difference in the make-up of ethnic and racial percentages of children served in Chicago compared with the rest of the state (Figure 2). Most of the children served in Chicago are black (50%) and Hispanic (36%), while the downstate program served 20% black and 8% Hispanic. The ethnic distribution of children served in the downstate projects has remained the same over the years, while in Chicago the percentage of Hispanic children increased (22% in FY 87 to 36% in FY 91) and the percentage of black children decreased (70% to 50%).

FIGURE 2
RACIAL/ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF CHILDREN
SERVED IN PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM



FY 91 DOWNSTATE



FY 91 CHICAGO

The statewide performance of children by different ethnic/racial backgrounds is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Readiness Level by Ethnicity

| Readiness Level | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian | American Indian | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Above Average | 24.3% | 24.2% | 25.1% | 30.0% | 25.0% | 19.5% |
| Average | 54.8% | 42.9% | 40.9% | 46.0% | 55.0% | 54.4% |
| Below Average | 16.0% | 20.9% | 21.7% | 17.6% | 20.0% | 20.1% |
| Deficient | 4.9% | 12.0% | 12.3% | 6.4% | 0.0% | 6.0% |
| Total Number of Children | 6,787 | 3,909 | 2,623 | 313 | 20 | 149 |

**Family Income Level**

The program served a significant number of indigent children. "Indigent," defined as lacking the means of subsistence, impoverished, was determined by using the criteria for identifying children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Since most programs operate only half days and do not offer meals, 43% of downstate and 3% of Chicago children's lunch status was unknown in FY 91. Statewide, for children whose lunch status was known, about 68% of the children served were eligible for free lunch and another 8% were eligible for reduced-price lunch. These FY 91 figures are the same as in FY 90. In FY 89 and before, 75% of the children were eligible for free lunch with about 8-9% eligible for reduced-price lunch. About 80% of the children served in Chicago were eligible for free lunch, compared to 54% of downstate children. See Figure 3 (Table 11 in Appendix C).

Family income seems to have some effect on performance rankings. As Figure 4 reveals, only 68% of the children who were eligible for free lunch performed at above average or average levels in kindergarten readiness skills, compared to 82% of the children who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. This difference in performance is comparable statewide, with both Chicago and downstate areas showing similar patterns.

FIGURE 3
LUNCH STATUS OF CHILDREN SERVED
IN PREKINDERGARTEN AT-RISK PROGRAM

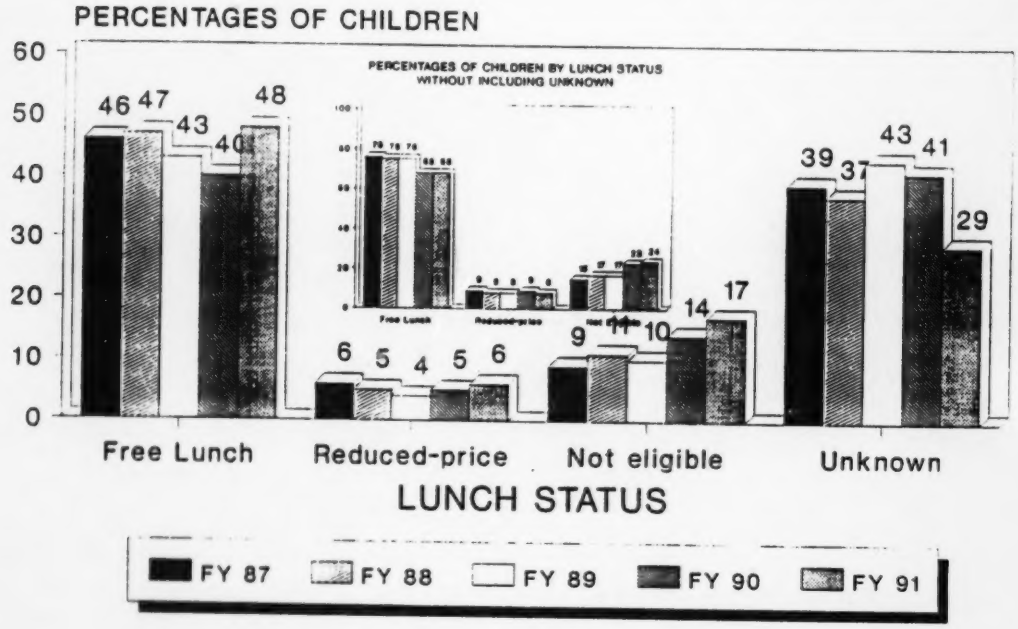
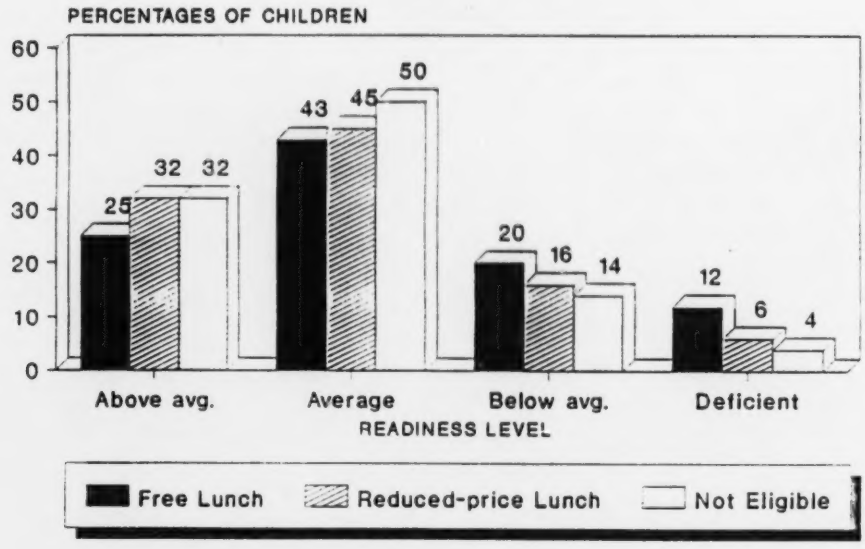


FIGURE 4
READINESS LEVEL
BY SCHOOL LUNCH STATUS IN FY 91




**Health Problems**

The screening procedures identified a number of children with potential health problems and vision or hearing deficits. During FY 91, 73% of the children served in the program were reported as having no health problems compared to 88% in FY 89 and 81% in FY 90. In FY 91, 333 children needed required immunizations. (See Table 5 for detailed data on health problems.) Children who were screened but not served were not included in these numbers, although their parents received information about their child's health status.

Table 5. Health Status of Children Served in the Prekindergarten Program

| | % of Children | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Health Problems* | FY 89 | FY 90 | FY 91 |
| None | 88.4 | 80.6 | 72.5 |
| Vision Deficits | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.5 |
| Hearing Deficits | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.2 |
| Immunization Needs | 1.4 | 2.4 | 1.4 |
| Speech** | N/A | 10.0 | 9.8 |
| Other Health Problems | 7.0 | 7.9 | 17.6 |

* Some children were reported as having more than one health problem, therefore, the results may reflect duplicate counts.

** Data for children in the Chicago program are not available.

**Previous Program Experience**

Approximately two-thirds (65%) of the children identified as at-risk and enrolled in the program had no previous preschool experience. Table 6 identifies the percentage of children in the programs who have had previous preschool experience. These percentages have remained the same from previous years, except the percentage of children with two years of prekindergarten experience. The number of children with two years of participation increased from 16% to 21% in FY 91.

Table 6. Percentage of Children Served in the Prekindergarten Program Who Had Other Preschool Experience

| Previous Preschool Experience | % of Children FY 89 | FY 90 | FY 91 |
|---|---|---|---|
| None | 63.0 | 62.2 | 65.1 |
| Private Sector | 6.6 | 6.5 | 6.5 |
| Chapter 1 | 0.2 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| Special Education | 1.2 | 1.0 | 0.9 |
| Head Start | 3.1 | 2.5 | 2.6 |
| Other State Programs | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.7 |
| Other Preschool | 2.2 | 1.9 | 2.2 |
| 2nd Year of PreK "At-Risk" | 16.5 | 16.1 | 21.2 |
| Unknown | 6.2 | 9.0 | 15.8 |
| Total Number of Children | 10,455 | 17,176 | 23,372 |

**Note:** The percentages do not total 100% because some children attended more than one program and were counted twice.

Children who had previous preschool experience were ranked higher in their readiness levels than children who did not. **Children who attended two years in the at-risk program were ranked even higher than children who had other preschool experiences.** As Table 7 reveals, 29% of the children who participated two years in the prekindergarten at-risk program were assessed as above average, compared to 23% with other preschool program experience and 21% with no previous experience.

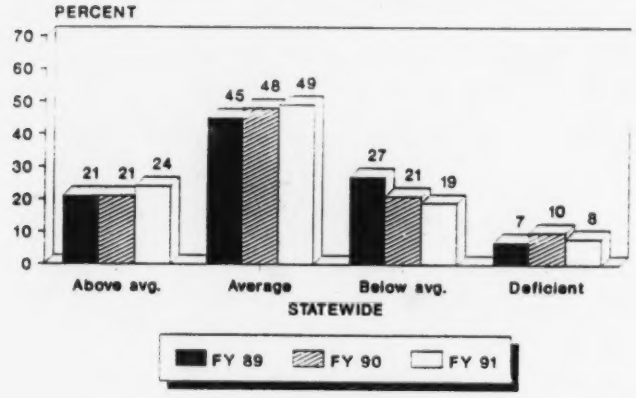
Table 7. Readiness Level of Children by Their Previous Preschool Experience

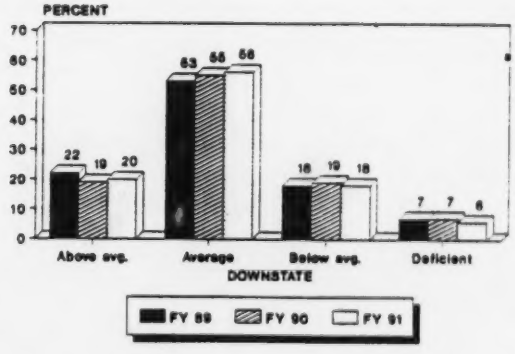
| Readiness Level | No Experience | Other Program Experience | Two Years of Participation in the Prekindergarden Program |
|---|---|---|---|
| Above Average | 20.7% | 22.5% | 29.3% |
| Average | 50.7% | 52.4% | 48.5% |
| Below Average | 20.0% | 18.4% | 16.2% |
| Deficient | 8.5% | 6.7% | 6.0% |

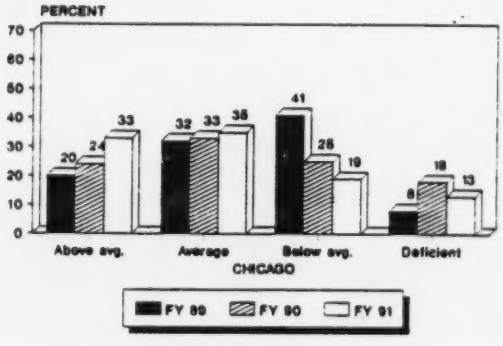
## The Overall Success of Prekindergarten Children

One measure of success for the program is the level of kindergarten readiness at the end of the prekindergarten program. In FY 91, about 73% were ranked as above average or average. From the program's beginning, these percentages have increased slightly every year. In FY 88 and FY 89, 66% of the children were ranked as above average or average compared to 69% in FY 90 (see Figure 5). Figure 5 also displays separately the performance of children from Chicago and downstate. It should be noted that this difference could be the result of different assessment instruments and performance criteria.

FIGURE 5
KINDERGARTEN READINESS LEVEL
BY PROGRAM YEARS



## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

In FY 91, the state appropriated $63 million for the program almost four times (396% increase) the $12.7 million appropriation in FY 87. In FY 91, separate data were collected on direct and in-kind contributions at the local district level. Besides the $62,801,638 grant from the state prekindergarten fund, districts reported that a total of $880,743 were contributed directly to the program from local school district budgets and another $99,874 were contributed directly to the program from other state and private resources. The FY 91 total direct allocation was $63,782,255. Districts also estimated that $1,927,927 were in-kind contributions, making the amount of $65,710,183 available to the program either by direct or indirect contribution.

In FY 91, almost 52% of the expenditure went to pay instructional salaries and benefits, compared to 54% in FY 90, 56% in FY 89 and 61% in FY 88. Figure 6 displays the percentages of state fund expenditure by services. Other major expenditures were 9.1% for operations and maintenance, 7.2% for instructional material and equipment, 6.3% for community services and 5.4% for transportation..

These percentages are calculated from state funds only and are about the same as reported in FY 88 and FY 89. The increase in operation and maintance expense from 6.1% in FY 90 to 9.1% in FY 91 is the result of Chicago schools buying mobile classrooms to serve more prekindergarten children. (See Table 12 in Appendix C for detailed expenditures breakdown by each service.)

In FY 91, about 53 projects served children during the summer. The average cost per child, calculated by prorating the summer enrollment for the FY 91 school year, was $2,182, almost the same as $2,124 in FY 90. The average state cost per child was $2,209 in FY 89 and $1,800 in FY 88.

FIGURE 6
FY 91 STATE FUND EXPENDITURE
BY SERVICES

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## PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

The unique characteristic of the Illinois program is its recognition of the potential for different needs from different demographic areas. The program allows districts to develop their own individual and unique at-risk programs and continue to operate within the State Board of Education's guidelines (see Appendix A). ISBE collects information from each project to answer the following questions:

- What kinds of instructional settings (classroom, home-based, hours per week, locations, etc.) characterize the Illinois prekindergarten program?
- What types of certification do prekindergarten teachers hold?
- What is the teacher-child ratio?
- What other agencies are involved in the program? What services do these agencies provide?
- What level of parent involvement is found in local programs?

### Instructional Settings

A project can offer different instructional settings depending upon available resources and needs of children. In FY 91, the 236 projects offered 291 different types of program services. About 83% of the projects serving 93% of the children were classroom-based. About 5% of the children were served through a combination of classroom and home-based instruction, and 2.5% of the children were served in only home-based settings. The remaining were served by "other types" of instruction. "Other types" of instruction include receiving services while attending a day care program, or being served by prekindergarten staff at another site in the community (usually less than 2 hours a week). These percentages have remained about the same over the last three years.

Eighty-four percent of children receiving services only in classroom settings attended projects offering 9 to 14 hours a week of instruction. Statewide, only 2.7% of the children were served in a full-day classroom environment. In Chicago, all but 1% of the children were served in a half-day classroom-based setting.

### Characteristics of Educational Staff

The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers increased 24% from 671.3 in FY 90 to 831.2 in FY 91. However, the percent of teachers holding Early Childhood Education Certificates (ECE) decreased from 58% in FY 90 to 55% in FY 91, and the percentage of teachers holding an elementary certificate with experience in kindergarten or preschool increased from 32 to 37%. The percent of teachers having Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) qualifications decreased from 7% to 4% in FY 91 (see Table 8).

In FY 89 and before, data were collected by only two categories: ECE and Elem/DCFS. In FY 88 and FY 89, only about 36-38% of the teachers had ECE certification (see figure 8 in Appendix C).

Table 8 indicates the percentages of children served by categories of teacher certification. While the total number of children served increased (31%), the percentage of children served by teachers with ECE certification decreased slightly from 62% in FY 90 to 58% in FY 91.

Table 8. Number and Percent of Prekindergarten Staff by Categories of Certification and Percent of Children Served

| Certification | FTE Teachers | | | | Students Served | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FY 90 | | FY 91 | | FY 90 | FY 91 |
| | # | % | # | % | % | % |
| ECE Certified | 388.2 | 57.8 | 455.5 | 54.8 | 61.9 | 57.6 |
| Elementary Certificate with Experience | 217.1 | 32.3 | 310.0 | 37.3 | 30.3 | 37.4 |
| Baccalaureate Degree in Child Development | 18.5 | 2.8 | 31.5 | 3.8 | 1.9 | 1.8 |
| DCFS Qualified | 47.5 | 7.1 | 34.2 | 4.1 | 5.9 | 3.2 |
| Total FTE Teachers | 671.3 | 100.0 | 831.2 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Teacher-Child Ratio**

The teacher-child ratio in the largest class was 1 to 14.5, and the teacher's aide-child ratio was also 1 to 14.5. The adult-child ratio (teacher and teacher's aide) in the largest class was 1 to 7.3 the same as in FY 90. The adult-child ratio required by rules and regulations of the Illinois prekindergarten program is one adult to 10 children and no more than 20 children in each classroom.

**Collaboration with Other Programs and Agencies**

The Illinois State Board of Education encourages school districts to establish collaborative agreements with other state agencies and state programs to avoid service duplication and to maximize the use of available resources.

Almost all instructional programs (273 out of 291) had some kind of collaborative involvement with other agencies and programs. Most programs (223) have developed collaborative arrangements with special education for screening and other resources. Collaboration activities with adult education agencies were most often used for parent education (157 programs) and resources (115). Head Start was another program frequently cited for collaborative involvement in an effort to coordinate resources, screening and other activities. There were also collaborative arrangements with universities, the Department of Children and Family Services, Public Health, other health agencies and other non-profit organizations. Table 13 in Appendix C identifies the number of programs involved in collaborative activities with different prekindergarten projects.

**Parent Participation and Involvement**

Substantial evidence suggests that parents' involvement in their children's education has a major influence on achievement throughout their school years. The Illinois State Board of Education emphasizes that all prekindergarten programs should include parent participation and parent education components as integral parts of the projects.

The Illinois State Board of Education contracted with early childhood education consultants to visit project sites and provide recommendations for improving curriculum and program practices. These on-site review processes revealed that 94% of the total classroom programs emphasized and strengthened the role of the parent as the child's primary educator. Another 4% of the projects had just started programs which emphasize the parents' role in their child's education. Even after a 28% increase in the projects (52 new projects), these percentages are better than in FY 90. Data from the on-site review process revealed that:

82% of the projects had a parent resource library,
88% had a children's book lending library,
69% had a toy lending library.

These efforts by districts resulted in almost 60% of the parents participating in three or more parent involvement activities. Only 6% of the parents did not participate in any activities. This has not significantly changed from the beginning of the program.

The review of student data collected from prekindergarten programs supports the belief that parent involvement does influence student performance. The performance of children whose parents participated in more parent involvement activities was ranked higher than children whose parents did not. The strong relationship between parent participation and a child's performance level has also been observed in earlier years of this program.

## CONCLUSION

The Illinois Prekindergarten At-Risk Program has experienced significant growth since its implementation. The number of participating projects has increased 151%, providing access to a 247% increase in eligible students. The state's commitment to the Prekindergarten Program has continued with a 195% increase in funding from FY 88, while over the same period the cost per child for service provision has increased by only 21%.

Program expansion has resulted in services being provided to a broader base of children considered at-risk, i.e., more 3-year-olds. From FY 88 through FY 91, aggregate performance rankings have shown a slight increase in the number of children ranked in the above average and average categories across four academic and behavior categories.

There is a clear indication that the program has had a positive influence on kindergarten readiness and that performance levels have been sustained in early elementary grades. Program results also suggest that children from environments conducive to providing risk conditions are, in fact, in need of services to a greater extent than are students from more stable environments. Performance rankings for students from low-income and single-parent families tend to be lower than their counterparts who come from two-parent families and households with higher incomes.

During FY 91, the Illinois State Board of Education contracted with an external party to conduct an evaluation of the Illinois Prekindergarten Program. The comprehensive evaluation concluded the following:

- The program has been implemented in accordance with the law and regulations. **The State Board policies have provided guidelines that have resulted in quality prekindergarten programs being implemented statewide.** The appropriate target population, children at-risk of academic failure, is being served. However, because of limited funding, all at-risk children statewide are not being served.

- Data received from the program are very encouraging and indicate that the program has been a success for the students on a number of valid outcome measures: readiness for kindergarten, promotion rates, special education and supplemental program placements, and evaluation of student performance by subject area.

- An effort had been made to collect statewide data for all the students in elementary grades in order to compare the success of prekindergarten children with statewide regular students. The data revealed that prekindergarten children appear to be making progress equal to their peers in their grade placement, retention rate, and special program placements. This is a very encouraging indicator of the effectiveness of the program.

Educators statewide are very willing to provide anecdotal reports of the success of the Prekindergarten At-Risk Program. Reports of program success are easily obtained by talking with any project staff member, and consistently similar findings are reported by staff from different projects across the state. Teachers and project directors describe how good the program has been for individual children and how much improvement some children in the program make. Some of the program successes that have been reported by teachers declare that as a result of their participation in the program, children:

- Have a readiness to learn and a positive attitude about school.
- Have learned to trust adults and do not cry about being away from home.
- Show a desire to learn, a greater orientation to work, and the ability to engage/focus on tasks for longer periods of time.
- Are more independent, have greater self-control, and understand structure and consequences.
- Show improved development in cognitive and language skills.
- Are inquisitive; have better background experiences to draw on for language/vocabulary development; and generally know more about books, art, music, etc. Subsequently, they start to read earlier.
- Show improved development in their fine motor skills.
- Become experienced with art media, scissors, and other materials.
- Can follow directions and participate more actively in groups.
- Possess social skills and generally get along better with their peers.

The case scenarios illustrate that the children served by prekindergarten are very much at-risk of academic difficulties as they enter the elementary grades. They enter the prekindergarten program with delays in their social and pre-academic readiness in comparison to their age peers. Often their delay is due, at least in part, to unstable or neglectful family situations that continue after the prekindergarten experience is over. Prekindergarten programs are not just a "quick fix" but should be accompanied by additional support for at-risk children in elementary school.

Significant gains are often noted for individual children served by the prekindergarten program. Performances of 30-40% on readiness skills would not be uncommon at the time of the pre-testing, while post-test scores often reached 85% or more. Unfortunately, these gains may not be sufficient to bring the child to a level that is "competitive" with his or her age peers. Further, the gains may not continue as the children enter classes that are not developmentally oriented, and do not provide the individual support that these children often need. Even with supportive and developmentally appropriate classes at the kindergarten and first-grade levels and beyond, these children typically face serious challenges in their school careers that prekindergarten cannot "cure" in one or two years.

There are, however, children whose prekindergarten experience and active parental involvement so impact their development, that they make excellent progress in kindergarten, first and second grades. They become class leaders and achieve academically. Their parents continue their active involvement and become leaders in parent-teacher organizations, assist with classroom activities, and organize school events and classroom outings.

The structures and characteristics of programs that have been associated with effective programs, have been identified through many sources: a review of the literature, interviews of ISBE staff, interviews with early childhood professionals, interviews of local project staff, surveys of local project staff, surveys of other states' early childhood staff, and the observation of the evaluation team. These sources identified the following characteristics associated with effective programs:

1. Developmentally Appropriate Program
2. Parent Involvement
3. Parent Education
4. Qualified Staff
5. Staff Development and Training
6. Adequate Funding
7. Class Size
8. Program Philosophy
9. Program Administrator
10. Screening
11. Evaluation
12. Inter- and Intra- Agency Coordination/Linkages

The evaluation team concluded that many of the Illinois Prekindergarten At-Risk projects already have structures and characteristics which are associated with effective programs.

## APPENDIX A

### State Board of Education Policy Statement on Early Childhood Education Adopted May 9, 1985 Springfield, Illinois

Early childhood education, for the purposes of this policy, constitutes those educational programs, practices, and services which have as a primary focus the developmental needs of children prior to the time they enter first grade. It will be the policy of the Illinois State Board of Education to seek such support as is necessary to encourage the development of early childhood education programs based on the following considerations:

A) Positive, nurturing experiences in the early years of life are essential in helping children develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally, and future academic success in school is strongly influenced by the character of early experiences.

B) Children identified as being at-risk of academic failure can dramatically improve their chances for success through participation in early childhood education programs.

C) Significant developmental differences exist among children, and particular attention should be given to such individual differences in the development of early education programs and services.

D) Meeting the education, health, welfare, and safety needs of young children requires collaboration among various childcare providers.

E) The quality of instructional staff and leadership are especially critical elements in effective early childhood education programs.

Concurrent with Board action, the agency will:

A) Design a comprehensive public awareness program to inform Illinois policymakers, citizens, parents, and educational personnel of the importance of early childhood education, and of the importance of parental involvement in such programs;

B) Identify exemplary prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, widely disseminate findings and coordinate the training necessary to the wide adoption of such programs;

C) Initiate and support efforts to improve the preservice and inservice training of early childhood education teachers, elementary teachers, and principals; and

D) Engage in future study of the issue of parent education in Illinois schools, identify the range and character of needs, explore alternatives, and offer appropriate recommendations to the State Board of Education.

## APPENDIX B

### The School Code of Illinois

Sec. 2-3.71 Grants for preschool educational programs. (a) The State Board of Education shall implement and administer a grant program consisting of grants to public school districts to conduct preschool educational programs for children ages 3 to 5 which include a parent education component. A public school district which receives grants under this Section may subcontract with a private school, not-for-profit corporation or other governmental agency to conduct a preschool educational program. Except as otherwise provided in paragraphs (2) and (3) of this subsection (a), all teachers of such programs shall ~~either~~ (i) hold early childhood teaching certificates issued under Article 21, ~~or Section 34-83 of this code~~, or (ii) hold elementary certificates issued under Article 21 with kindergarten or preschool experience, or (iii) hold baccalaureate degrees in child development, experience, or (iv) ~~shall~~ meet the requirements for supervising a day care center under the Child Care Act of 1969, as amended.

(2) After the effective date of this Amendatory Act of 1989, any persons newly hired to teach in the program authorized pursuant to this Section shall hold the certification required pursuant to subparagraphs (i), (ii) or (iii) of paragraph (1) of this subsection.

(3) After July 1, 1998, any teacher in the program authorized by this Section shall hold an early childhood teaching certificate.

(b) The State Board of Education shall provide the primary source of funding through appropriations for this program. Such funds shall be distributed for the benefit of children who because of their home and community environment are subject to such language, cultural, economic and like disadvantages that they have been determined as a result of screening procedures to be at risk of academic failure. Such screening procedures shall be based on criteria established by the State Board of Education.

(c) The State Board of Education shall develop and provide evaluation tools, including tests, that school districts may use to evaluate children for school readiness prior to age 5. The State Board of Education shall require school districts to obtain consent from the parents or guardians of children before any evaluations are conducted. The State Board of Education shall encourage local school districts to evaluate the population of preschool children in their districts and provide preschool programs, pursuant to this Section, where appropriate.

d) The State Board of Education shall report to the General Assembly by July 1, 1989, and every 3 years thereafter, on the results and progress of students who were enrolled in preschool educational programs, including an assessment of which programs have been most successful in promoting academic excellence and alleviating academic failure. The State Board of Education shall assess the academic progress of all students who have been enrolled in preschool educational programs.

## APPENDIX C

Table 9. Assessment of Prekindergarten Children in Elementary Grades in FY 91

| | Above Average | Average | Below Average | Deficient |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reading** | | | | |
| Kindergarten | 23% | 50% | 22% | 5% |
| First Grade | 24% | 46% | 23% | 7% |
| Second Grade | 24% | 45% | 26% | 5% |
| Third Grade | 23% | 50% | 24% | 3% |
| **Mathematics** | | | | |
| Kindergarten | 24% | 56% | 17% | 4% |
| First Grade | 26% | 55% | 15% | 4% |
| Second Grade | 24% | 54% | 19% | 3% |
| Third Grade | 25% | 54% | 18% | 3% |
| **Language** | | | | |
| Kindergarten | 23% | 57% | 18% | 3% |
| First Grade | 23% | 54% | 19% | 4% |
| Second Grade | 21% | 54% | 22% | 3% |
| Third Grade | 23% | 54% | 20% | 3% |
| **Behavior** | | | | |
| Kindergarten | 30% | 53% | 14% | 3% |
| First Grade | 31% | 52% | 13% | 4% |
| Second Grade | 31% | 50% | 15% | 4% |
| Third Grade | 31% | 50% | 14% | 5% |

Kindergarten n = 8,364, First Grade n = 4,894
Second Grade n = 2,581, Third Grade n = 1,686

Table 10. Readiness Level by Family Structure

| Readiness Level | Both Parents | Single Parent | Adult | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Above Average | 24.6% | 21.6% | 20.0% | 23.7% |
| Average | 51.8% | 48.0% | 52.8% | 50.0% |
| Below Average | 17.5% | 20.6% | 18.5% | 18.9% |
| Deficient | 6.1% | 9.8% | 8.7% | 7.5% |

Table 11. Lunch Status of Children Served in Prekindergarten Program by Downstate and Chicago

| | Downstate | | | Chicago | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lunch Status | FY 89 % | FY 90 % | FY91 % | FY 89 % | FY 90 % | FY 91 % |
| Free Lunch | 20 (59) | 26 (56) | 48 (68) | 84 (85) | 73 (81) | 80 (82) |
| Reduced-Price | 3 (9) | 4 (10) | 6 (8) | 7 (7) | 7 (8) | 7 (7) |
| Not Eligible | 11 (32) | 15 (34) | 17 (24) | 8 (8) | 11 (11) | 10 (11) |
| Unknown | 66 - | 55 - | 29 - | 1 - | 10 - | 3 - |
| Total | 100 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (100) | 100 (100) |

Percentages in parentheses are calculated without including the unknown.

**Table 12. FY 91 FINANCIAL SUMMARY**
**Prekindergarten At-Risk Program**

**SOURCES OF FUNDS:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **$ 62,801,638** | **State Prekindergarten Fund** |
| **$ 66,257** | **Other State Educational Funds** |
| **$ 880,743** | **Local Sources, Direct Contribution** |
| **$ 1,927,927** | **Local Sources, In-Kind Contribution** |
| **$ 33,618** | **Other Sources (Federal Funds, Foundation Funds, etc.)** |
| **$65,710,183** | **TOTAL PROGRAM FUNDS** |

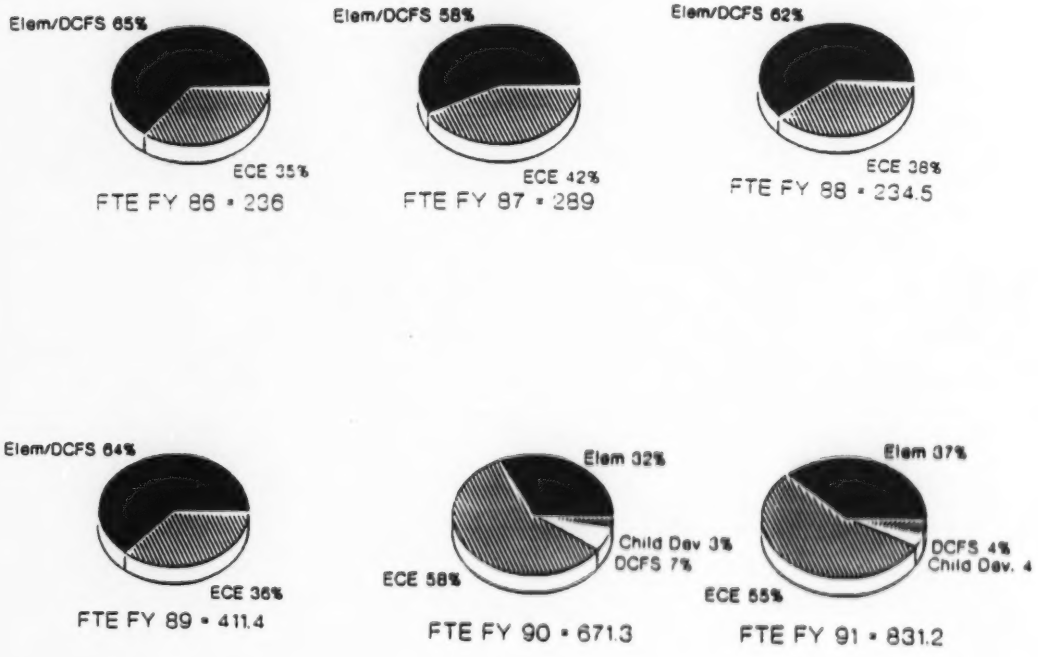
| LINE | Acct. No. (1) | | EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS (2) | TOTAL STATE FUND EXPENDITURE (3) | TOTAL DIRECT EXPENDITURE (OTHER FUND) (4) | IN-KIND EXPENDITURE (5) | TOTAL EXPENDITURE (6) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | | A | Salaries and Fringe Benefits | 32,372,880 | 370,912 | 102,542 | 32,846,334 |
| 02 | Instr. | B | Instructional Materials | 1,522,429 | 17,340 | 22,446 | 1,562,215 |
| 03 | 100 | C | Instructional Equipment | 1,927,114 | 14,926 | 35,648 | 1,977,688 |
| 04 | | D | Teaching Supplies and All Other Expenses for Instruction | 1,074,270 | 16,108 | 25,136 | 1,115,514 |
| 05 | 211 | | Attendance Services | 598,149 | - | 35,544 | 633,693 |
| 06 | 212 | | Guidance Services | 1,596,489 | 411 | 19,975 | 1,616,875 |
| 07 | 213 | | Health Services | 1,009,745 | 6,189 | 50,551 | 1,066,485 |
| 08 | 214 | | Psychological Services | 254,105 | 6,574 | 56,486 | 317,165 |
| 09 | 215 | | Speech and Audio Pathology Services | 1,134,573 | 50,267 | 119,439 | 1,304,279 |
| 10 | 221 | | Improvement of Instruction | 2,601,657 | 14,299 | 21,580 | 2,637,536 |
| 11 | 222 | A | Media Educational Materials | 20,169 | 1,200 | 2,387 | 23,756 |
| 12 | | B | Media Educational Equipment | 14,758 | 1,323 | 3,592 | 19,673 |
| 13 | 230 | | General Administration | 1,386,529 | 62,880 | 321,337 | 1,770,746 |
| 14 | 240 | | School Administration | - | - | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| 15 | 251/ 252 | | Business/Fiscal Services | 96,168 | 8,145 | 70,656 | 174,969 |
| 16 | 253 | | Construction and Remodeling | - | 15,000 | - | 15,000 |
| 17 | 254 | | Operation and Maintenance | 5,694,722 | 85,443 | 446,628 | 6,226,793 |
| 18 | 255 | | Pupil Transportation | 3,361,559 | 256,419 | 492,579 | 4,110,557 |
| 19 | 256 | | Food Services | 741,154 | 7,027 | 34,573 | 782,754 |
| 20 | 257 | | Internal Services | 40,339 | - | 11,995 | 52,334 |
| 21 | 260 | | Central Services | 361,480 | - | 21,091 | 382,571 |
| 22 | 290 | | Supporting Services - Other | 321,456 | 30,412 | 12,591 | 364,459 |
| 23 | 300 | | Community Services | 3,947,821 | 15,743 | 12,151 | 3,975,715 |
| 24 | 410 | | Payments to Other Governmental Units | 2,724,072 | - | 4,000 | 2,728,072 |
| 25 | TOTAL EXPENDITURES | | | 62,801,638 | 980,618 | 1,927,927 | |
| 27 | TOTAL PROJECT EXPENDITURES | | | | | | 65,710,183 |

Table 13. Number of Projects Collaborating with Other Programs by Activities

| Programs | Inservice | Parent Education | Resources | Screening | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 through 2 Program | 41 | 43 | 90 | 76 | 58 |
| Head Start | 73 | 51 | 120 | 76 | 76 |
| Special Education | 106 | 92 | 167 | 223 | 73 |
| Chapter 1 | 35 | 35 | 71 | 26 | 29 |
| Child Care Centers | 53 | 36 | 78 | 69 | 57 |
| Adult Education/Literacy | 57 | 157 | 115 | 18 | 48 |
| Other (Identify) | 34 | 37 | 69 | 30 | 46 |

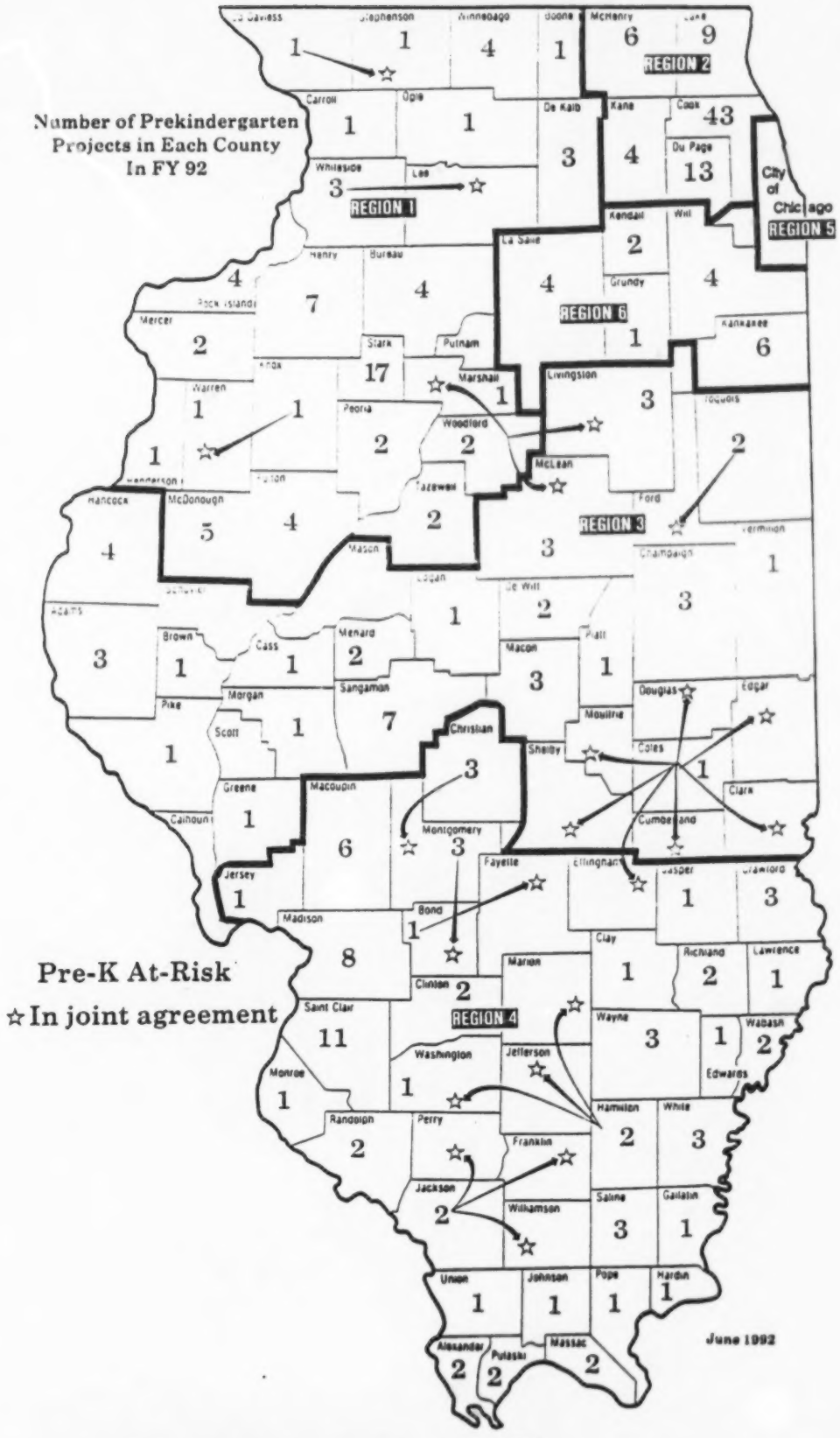
Note: Total number of programs is 291.

**FIGURE 8**
**FTE Teachers by Certifications**



**APPENDIX D**

# Pre-K At-Risk

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